

Walking Hollywood

In Larchmont Village, you feel the energy and hear the deep hum of the metropolis – but there is no one around

By Ana Tajder

OK, so three weeks ago, I officially moved to Los Angeles. It is not that I wanted to *live* in Los Angeles. Or work in movies. I fell in love. With a *man* who wants to live in Los Angeles. And works in movies. Life has its own plans.

For a European, the USA is.... let me be diplomatic here.... *strange* enough. But Los Angeles is like landing on a distant planet. You are happy; there are (still) traces of water and atmosphere, so you figure you won't die immediately. But to survive here you might need other things. Among others: a job in The Industry, at least one part of your body enhanced with silicone or chemically treated, a pair of UGGs and (the quintessential) – *a car* (if you can't afford a BMW, it must be a Prius).

Speaking of which, today, I felt especially courageous and rebellious (and hungry) and I dared the streets of LA – I decided to walk to the supermarket. Ha! Try that. I live in a very tame and charming part of Hollywood called Larchmont Village. Larchmont is like Wisteria Lane with a Mexican touch, smaller houses and truly amazing gardens. Superb lawns, colorful flowers, palm trees.

But no people.

Including my last visit to LA, I've lived here for six weeks, but still haven't figured out where the people are. They work all right. But don't they ever drive to work, come home or pick their kids from school? I don't know. The only time I see anyone is when a (very) random person passes walking their dog. Or an even more random jogger trots by, who will suddenly drop on the pavement and start doing push ups and stretches in front of you. Weird ritual.

It took me 13 minutes to walk to the supermarket, then 13 more back. It was six p.m., what should have been the busiest time of the day. Twenty six minutes of walking through this residential area during rush hour, and I met one old woman. And one weird jogger, who looked like a mixture of Brad Pitt and Steven Tyler.

Walking through LA is really a strange experience. You know that you are in one of the biggest cities in the world. You can feel the energy of the millions of people. You can hear the deep hum of the metropolis. You can smell the pollution.

But there's no one around. Until you reach a busier street where you see people in their cars (There is always only one (1) person in the car here. I wonder if there's a special law for that) who stare at you in sheer amazement. *A pedestrian!*? The amazement was even bigger as I was returning from the supermarket, carrying two white plastic bags. Because if you're just walking, there's still a chance you're doing it because your healer/nutritionist/chiropractic recommended it. But if you're carrying

bags, it is clear that you are doing it (walking) for practical purposes, to get from point A to point B. And do errands somewhere in between. Practical is not a comprehensive term in this world if it does not include some kind of an environmentally deadly machine.

There was something very romantic about the walk home though. I walked through those charming Wisteria-meets-Mexico lanes and the drivers' stares made me very aware of the two plastic bags of groceries I was carrying.

I remembered my childhood in Zagreb. Around four p.m., the city swarmed with women returning home from work (they started at seven) each one carrying two white bags of groceries. I remembered standing at the balcony and watching my beautiful mum walking home with one white bag in each hand. Suddenly I became homesick.

But then I turned my head to the left and saw the Hollywood sign up on the hills. And the clash of those two things – these white letters and those white bags from the past made it better. I am here to explore. On foot.